

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

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R 140500 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5160

INFO AMEMBASSY KIGALI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENG

COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 0350

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:

SUBJ: POLITICAL SITUATION IN TANANARIVE DARKENS

CINCLANT AND CINCUSNAVEUR FOR POLADS

KIGALI FOR COHEN

BEGIN SUMMARY: CRITICISM OF GOVT HAS BEEN GROWING STEADILY IN TANANARIVE. MANY PREDICT TROUBLE BY TIME FRANCO- MALAGASY NEGOTIATIONS END IN PARIS UNLESS GOVT DEMONSTRATES IT HAS HONESTLY ACHIEVED NATIONALISTIC AIMS. TANANARIVE OPPONENTS ARE CHIEFLY PRO- ANTI- FRENCH AND ANTI- " COTIER". THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT MILITARY COULD REPRESS REBELLION BUT QUESTION ARISES WHETHER MILITARY LEADERS WOULD HAVE ANY MORE HEART FOR DOING SO NOW THAN LAST YEAR WHEN TSIRANANA WAS TOPPLED. END SUMMARY.

1. ATMOSPHERE IN TANANARIVE BECOMES INCREASINGLY EDGY AS MARCH 29 APPROACHES. THAT IS ANNIVERSARY OF OUTBREAK OF 1947 REBELLION AGAINST FRENCH AND DATE BY WHICH GOMR INSISTS CURRENT FRANCO- MALAGASY NEGOTIATIONS ARE TO BE CONCLUDED. CATHOLIC BILINGUAL DAILY " ADY GASY"
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GIVES FAIR ASSESSMENT OF " FEELING OF DESPAIR" IN STATING, " ONE MUST NOT RPT NOT HIDE THE FACT THAT PUBLIC OPINION MORE AND MORE ATTRIBUTES PART OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PRESENT SITUATION TO THE GOVERNMENT. THE END OF THE NEGOTIATIONS IN PARIS WILL BRING AN END TO THE TRUCE WHICH EVERYONE HAS BEEN APPLYING, AND THE LEAST SPARK COULD BE A CALL TO HIGHLY TEMPTING ADVENTURE".

2. DURING PAST WEEK OR SO, AS RUMORS OF PENDING RIOTS AND THREATENING COUPS CIRCULATE AROUND CITY, LOCAL FRENCH FORCES HAVE CONTINUED ON ALERT AND HAVE BEEN CONSIGED TO BASE AT IVATO, PARTLY FOR THEIR OWN DEFENSE BUT EQUALLY TO AVOID OCCASIONS FOR INCIDENTS IN CITY BETWEEN FRENCH MILITARY PERSONNEL AND ANTI- FRENCH ACTIVISTS. MISSION OFFICER HAS WITNESSED INCREASING HARASSMENT OF CERTAIN FRENCH- OWNED BARS AND RESTAURANTS IN CENTER OF CITY, PARTICULARLY LATE AT NIGHT, BY ZOAM (UNEMPLOYED) GANGS. SO FAR THEY HAVE DISPERSED WITHOUT MAJOR INCIDENT.

3. CONTRIBUTING TO GENERAL EXASPERATION HAS BEEN CONTINUING SHORTAGE OF STAPLES, PARTICULARLY RICE AND MEAT, WHICH HAS GIVEN RISE TO LONG QUEUES OF GLUM CITIZENRY. GOVT IS HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR SITUATION BEING WORSE THAN AT ANY TIME DURING FORMER REGIME. BASIC CAUSE IS THAT AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION HAS NOT BEEN GROWING WITH POPULATION. IN ADDITION, DISTRIBUTION OF EMERGENCY IMPORTS OF RICE HAS BEEN SERIOUSLY HAMPERED BY TAMATAVE PORT SLOWDOWN AND DAMAGE TO TAMATAVE- TANANARIVE RAILROAD BY RECENT HEAVY RAINS.

4. MASS KIM MEETING MARCH 10 TURNED OUT TO BE MORE ORDERLY THAN EXPECTED. SECURITY FORCES WERE MUCH IN EVIDENCE, BUT NEED TO RESTRAIN VIOLENCE DID NOT RPT NOT MATERIALIZE. CHIEF DEMANDS WERE TRANSFER OF FRANCO- MALAGASY TALKS TO TANANARIVE, DEPARTURE OF FRENCH AMB DELAUNEY, FREE EDUCATION FOR ALL, AND, OF COURSE, ABOLISHING ALL FORMS OF IMPERIALISM AND CAPITALISM. PRO- SOVIET AKFM AND ITS LEADER MAYOR RICHARD ANDRIAMANJATO WERE ALSO CRITICIZED AS REPRESENTATIVES OF UPPER BOURGEOISIE. (AKFM TOOK BACK SEAT IN EVENTS OF LAST MAY.)

5. FACTIONS CAUSING AND THREATENING TROUBLE IN TANANARIVE ARE BASICALLY PRO- ANARCHY (FOR WHICH THERE IS CONSIDERABLE PHILOSOPHICAL SUPPORT HERE), ANTI- FRENCH AND, IN FACT, ANTI- " COTIER". NONE OF THE RADICAL GROUPS WOULD PUBLICLY ESPOUSE ANTI- " COTIERS" WHOM THEY SEE AS WILLING TO SELL MALAGASY BIRTHRIGHT FOR A MESS OF FRENCH POTAGE.

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6. SITUATION HAS NOT RPT NOT YET REACHED ALARMING STAGE. WE ARE, NEVERTHELESS, RELUCTANT TO PREDICT THAT PRESENT GOVT WILL BE ABLE TO CONTAIN RISING DISSENSION, PARTICULARLY IF IT IS UNABLE TO TURN OUTCOME OF PARIS TALKS INTO GREAT NATIONALIST VICTORY. FINMIN RAMAROSON' S SPEECH EVENING MARCH 9 (TANANARIVE 332) WAS UNDOUBTEDLY DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE PART OF THAT OBJECTIVE. RCENT GOVT ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAM ALSO MADE FOR PURPOSE OF ALLAYING CRITICISM.

7. GEN RAMANTSOA' S TEAM HAS LOST TANANARIVE' S PUBLIC' S IMAGINATION AND HAD NEVER CAPTURED " COTIERS". MILITARY WOULD HAVE NO RPT NO TROUBLE PUTTING DOWN REBELLION AGAINST PRESENT REGIME, BUT THERE IS SERIOUS QUESTION THAT IT, OR EVEN GEN RAMANANTSOA

FOR THAT MATTER, WOULD HAVE HEART FOR SUCH OPERATION.
MENDENHALL

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